

The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University

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LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

By PERRY BORCHERS

OUR College of Engineering, already embracing so many diversified fields, added yet another profession to its fold in the spring of last year when landscape architecture, formerly in the College of Education, was combined with architecture to form the department of architecture and landscape architecture in the College of Engineering.

"What kind of engineering are you taking?" you may have asked a classmate recently. When he replied "Landscape architecture," you may have wondered "What is landscape architecture?"

Though one of the newer courses at this University, landscape architecture has a long history. It is an art as ancient as the pyramids. The great empires of all times and all countries showed their pomp and majesty, their desire for beauty, in the gardens, parks, and pools which surrounded their estates, palaces, and capitol buildings. From old prints and from gardens still in existence, landscape architecture seems to have had its high-water marks under the Persians, the Moors in Spain, the Renaissance in Italy, and under Louis XIV in the gardens of Versailles. These gardens sometimes were measured in square miles, and in the case of Versailles had pools which could float small fleets of naval vessels.

In the 18th century there developed the English style of landscaping, informal, naturalistic, consisting of winding streams and paths wandering through small forests and meadows. It was introduced on the continent of Europe where many fine, old, formal, symmetrically arranged gardens of the Renaissance were destroyed to make place for the new, informal style.

Today if one asks a landscape architecture student what is his favorite style, he will probably seem somewhat puzzled and reply, "I suppose you mean whether I like formal or informal landscaping." All landscape architecture divides rather harmoniously into these two classifications.

Frederick Law Olmsted, the first great American landscape architect, and designer of Central Park in New York City in 1858, Prospect Park in Brooklyn, and many other great city parks, was a follower of Andrew Jackson Downing, a strong proponent of informal English landscape architecture. This informal, natural park design became the most important expression of American landscape architecture in the 19th century. At Newport and Tuxedo Park is the opposite style, with the architecture and landscape architecture patterned after France and Italy.

Other notable landscape architects of this country

have been Nolen, the foremost city planner, Warren Manning, and Ferruccio Vitale who was responsible for the establishment of the Lake Forest foundation of architecture and landscape architecture.

There has been a subtle change in late years. Landscape architecture, which previously mirrored the pomp and wealth of the ruling classes and was essentially a garden art for the pleasure of the few, has taken on a strong sociological consciousness and is directed to city planning, park planning, and the beautification of housing development. It is concerned now with giving pleasure to the masses.

There has been a change also in the practice of landscape architecture. In ancient times it was practiced by that artist-architect-engineer-inventor known as the "master-builder." Later it was practiced by men educated as architects. Not until the beginning of the 20th century was landscape architecture recognized as a separate profession and college courses established for it.

Various scattered courses in landscape architecture and gardening have been offered at Ohio State from 1895 on. In 1915 a curriculum of landscape architecture was established in the department of horticulture in the College of Agriculture. It was transferred in 1924 to the department of fine arts in the College of Education, and in 1938 to the department of architecture and landscape architecture in the College of Engineering.

The curriculum is divided into three phases which may account for the various shifts the department has made. There is horticulture, including the identification and care of plant material and use in planting designs; design, including freehand drawing and work in architecture and landscape architecture design; and engineering, including surveying and landscape construction.

It is a four year course, and unique among College of Engineering courses in that students start in landscape architecture courses in their freshman year.

Students in the department have many competitions and prizes unto which to "hitch their wagon." The Ryerson fellowship is determined by a collaborative competition given each spring to selected students in architecture and landscape architecture from the universities of Michigan, Illinois, Minnesota, Cincinnati, Armour Institute of Technology, Iowa State College, and the Ohio State University. These universities were the ones who supported the Lake Forest foundation of Architecture and Landscape Architecture when they were invited to participate. The money for the fel-

lowship comes from the income of the Ryerson estate. The prize itself is for one architect and one landscape architect and consists of \$1,200 to each to pay for one year's travel and study in Europe. The Ryerson Fellowship Committee may in return ask for sketches, a project, or a report in writing.

Each spring there is the five-week collaborative competition of the American Academy in Rome Alumni Association. Any school is eligible that can put in a team of not less than three students from the varied professions of architecture, landscape architecture, painting and sculpture. A prize of \$200 goes to the winning team.

There is also the American Academy in Rome prize, the preliminary competition of which is a 14-hour sketch problem for any graduate of an accredited college. From these not more than seven finalists are chosen to enter a competition lasting four weeks, involving a rather complete set of drawings for the judging committee. The one winner has two years' study in Rome with about \$1,250 a year and traveling expenses paid.

Besides these larger prizes there are fellowships and scholarships to Cornell and Harvard open to graduates, and the department at Ohio State hopes to establish small prizes for the best solutions of landscape problems.

The American Academy in Rome prize was won in 1929 by Thomas Price, '24, and one of the finalists in 1938 was Brooks Wigginton, '37. In the Ryerson fellowship the department at Ohio State has an enviable record. It was won by Ralph Reaser, '26, Stanley Brewster, '27, Erwin C. Zepp, '28, Leroy Augden, '33, Richard L. Yeager, '34, Fred T. Ramsey, '36, and Conrad H. Schmidt, '38.

The graduates of the department number about one hundred, and are doing many kinds of work. They are located in the National Park Service on projects such as the Natchez Trace Parkway, the Jamestown-Williamsburg-Yorktown parkway, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and the Skyline Drive; in metropolitan park districts in Cleveland, Cincinnati, New York, and Washington; in the Ohio Valley Regional Planning Commission; in the Federal Housing Authority; in various state park commissions, in the Improvement division of the Ohio State Highway department, and in private practice and in teaching.

The present setup in the College of Engineering promises to be a very beneficial one. According to Professor Charles R. Sutton, head of landscape architecture, the close collaboration of architecture and landscape architecture will be of great benefit to both professions, and will offer much fuller training to the students.